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## CORRESPONDENCE.

## A PASSAGE OF 'BÉOWULF.'

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS: There is a passage in 'Béowulf,' the force of one word of which has, it seems to me, been misunderstood by all the translators, English and German. The passage begins at line 2724 of GREIN'S edition:

*Biowulf maðelode, hé ofer benne spræc,  
wunde wælbléate (wisse hé gearwe  
þæt hé dæghwila gedrogen hæfde  
eorðan wyne; þá wæs eall sceacen  
dōgorgerimes, deað ungemete néah):  
"Nú ic suna minum syllan wolde  
gūðgewédu," etc.*

THORPE, KEMBLE, GARNETT, ARNOLD, WACKERBARTH, GREIN, ETTMÜLLER, and HEYNE, all make Béowulf speak of his wound, and in the glossary to HARRISON and SHARP'S edition of 'Béowulf,' *ofer*, in the first line of the passage, is defined 'about, of, concerning:' *hé ofer benne spræc*, 2725.

But does not the passage really mean that Béowulf did *not* speak of his wound? He knew that it was fatal, and that his end was near, and he had other things more important to speak about before he passed away.

The force of 'ofer' has, I think, been misunderstood by all the translators I've named. I would translate "*hé ofer benne spræc*," 'he beyond (of other things than) his wound, spake.'

If this is the correct meaning, and I'm quite sure it is, it is far more forcible than the one given by all the translators cited. What intervenes between "*Biowulf maðelode*," and "*Nú ic suna minum*," explains *why* he spake of other things than his wound. It was needless to speak of that—fatal, as it would soon prove—and his mind was intent on the 'war-weeds,' in which he had performed his great deeds. He regrets that he has no son to whom he can bequeath them; or such regret is implied: "*Nú ic suna minum syllan wolde gūðgewédu, þær mé gifeðe swá ðenig yrfeweard æfter wurde lice gelenge!*"

After alluding to his brave, and strong, and not unjust, rule of his people for fifty winters, he tells his beloved Wígláf to go quickly, the

hoard to view under the hoar stone, to be in haste that he (Béowulf) may look upon the ancient wealth, the jewel-splendors, he has won,

*"þæt ic þý séft mæge  
æfter mādðumwelan mīn álétan  
lif and léodscipe, þone ic longe héold!"*

His speaking not of his wound, suits better the character, too, of the great warrior.

HIRAM CORSON.

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## WOODWARD'S 'ENGLISH IN THE SCHOOLS.'

In their series of Monographs on Education, already more than once noticed in the NOTES, Messrs. D. C. Heath & Co. have rendered a service which entitles them to the thanks of teachers, the more so as these little books are not likely to "pay" in the direct commercial sense. The last of this admirable series is 'English in the Schools,' by F. C. WOODWARD, A. M. Professor of English in Wofford College, S. C., which, standing between HUFFCUT'S 'English in the Preparatory Schools' (noticed in March) and GENUNG'S 'Study of Rhetoric,' completes an excellent trilogy of "English" monographs for school and college. These monographs attest in a gratifying way the increasing interest in English study, which they are sure also to stimulate and promote.

We regret that space does not permit such notice of PROF. WOODWARD'S essay as its interest demands; yet it is hard to notice briefly a book which, however short (only 23 pages), tempts in almost every paragraph to the quotation of its incisive and striking, sometimes brilliant, sentences. PROF. WOODWARD writes clearly and strongly because his ideas are clear, and his convictions strong, upon the theme he discusses. He makes no doubt that the time has come—long since indeed—for a sharper assertion of the claims of English language and English literature to a fuller and sounder study in schools of every grade; for "English is the sole literature of ninety-nine hundredths of our people and the best literature of the other hundredth;" and "by virtue of its mother-tongue quality it claims the right to coördinate and direct all other studies;"